

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12370

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI FM CALCUTTA RPT FOR YOUR
INFO

QTE C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 2044

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ORISSA

1. SUMMARY: CONGRESS HAS CONTINUED TO INCREASE STRENGTH
IN ORISSA STATE ASSEMBLY AT EXPENSE OF BHARATIYA LOK DAL.
GAINING OF AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY HAS LED TO INCREASED
BICKERING WITHIN CONGRESS AND FALLING OUT WITH CPI. AS IN
WEST BENGAL, A NEW ANTI-CPI LEADERSHIP HAS RECENTLY BEEN
INSTALLED IN THE STATE YOUTH CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE MARCH CONGRESS HAS INCREASED ITS MAJORITY IN THE
147-MEMBER STATE ASSEMBLY FROM 75 TO 78. THIS PUTS THE
PARTY EIGHT SEATS AHEAD OF THE TOTAL IT OBTAINED IN THE
1974 ELECTIONS, WITH MOST OF THE DEFECTIONS COMING FROM
THE BHARATIYA LOK DAL. AS A RESULT, CONGRESS IS NO LONGER
DEPENDENT ON THE SEVEN-MEMBER CPI GROUP FOR A MAJORITY.

3. MANY OF THE NEW CONGRESS MLAS COME FROM THE OLD PRINCE-
LY STATES IN THE HIGHLAND AREAS OF ORISSA, AND ARE EITHER
FORMER RULERS OR ASSOCIATED WITH THEM. THEY MIGHT BE EX-
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PECTED TO BE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS OF LEFTIST

CHIEF MINISTER SATPATHY, AND INDEED CPI LEADER BHUPESH GUPTA RECENTLY CHARGED THAT NEW MEMBERS OF CONGRESS MIGHT IMPEDE GOVERNMENT'S LAND REFORM POLICY, AS THEY "REPRESENTED THE VESTED INTERESTS." HE ALSO CHARGED THAT THE SATPATHY GOVERNMENT HAD NOT FULLY IMPLEMENTED THE 20 POINT PROGRAM. EXCEPT FOR THE CUTTACK REGION, CONGRESS-CPI JOINT PROGRAMS AND RALLIES HAVE ENDED.

4. A RECENT SIGN OF INTRA-CONGRESS RIVALRY WAS THE FORMATION OF AN AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE STATE YOUTH CONGRESS, HEADED BY ANTI-SATPATHY LEADER NIRODE MOHANTY. IN FEBRUARY 1976 MOHANTY HAD SHOWN HIS OPPOSITION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER'S FACTION BY ATTACKING THE CPI, WHICH WAS THEN BEING WELCOMED IN VARIOUS GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TWENTY POINT PROGRAM. MOHANTY'S APPOINTMENT IS SEEN AS THE WORK OF SANJAY GANDHI AND HAS RESULTED IN THE RESIGNATION OF PRO-SATPATHY ELEMENTS FROM THE ORISSA YOUTH CONGRESS.

5. THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, THE BHARATIYA LOK DAL, IS ALSO SUFFERING FROM DEFECTIONS. THE PARTY--FORMED FROM THE SWANTANTRA PARTY, WHICH HAD BEEN STRONG IN THE HIGHLANDS, AND THE UTKAL CONGRESS, WHICH HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN THE COASTAL BELT--HAS SEEN MUCH OF ITS STRENGTH IN THE HILLS FALL AWAY IN THE FACE OF A DETERMINED EFFORT BY CONGRESS TO WOO THE TRIBAL PEOPLES CONCENTRATED THERE.

6. IN WHAT IN THE PAST HAS BEEN A STATE EVENLY BALANCED BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE OPPOSITION, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT FROM NOW ON CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO WORRY LESS AND LESS ABOUT EXTERNAL ENEMIES. INTERNAL FACTIONALISM MAY CREATE MORE PROBLEMS FOR CHIEF MINISTER SATPATHY, BUT SHE WILL PRESUMABLY REMAIN IN OFFICE AS LONG AS SHE MAINTAINS THE CONFIDENCE OF MRS. GANDHI.

KORN
UNQTE SCHNEIDER

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